



TRAINING FOR PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Public health professionals are responsible for protecting and maintaining the health of individuals and communities. They work in every kind of community with varied access to the resources needed to do their jobs. At the same time, the work they are called upon to do changes as new discoveries identify better ways to respond to maintaining the public's health.

The 2002 Institute of Medicine Report, *The Future of the Public's Health in the 21st Century*, states that the U.S. public health workforce is "insufficient and inadequately trained." Public health agencies at the state and local level have experienced diminishing resources resulting in fewer staff responsible for expanding jobs, which has led to less time and money for training and professional development.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

For the last decade CDC has worked to develop a national distance learning system of people, technology and funding to train public health workers in all disciplines. These systems include the National Laboratory Training Network (NLTN) and the Public Health Training Network (PHTN). NLTN provides clinical, environmental, and public health laboratory training exercises to laboratory professionals on over 20 topics of public health significance around the country, such as newborn screening, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), food safety, bioterrorism, testing for genetic disorders, and assuring quality in laboratory testing.

PHTN is a partnership of public and private organizations dedicated to bringing high quality adult learning opportunities to the learner anywhere at anytime. PHTN programs are marketed to clinicians and other public health populations and offered in multiple delivery formats, including satellite, web-cast (live and web-archive), phone bridge, CD-ROM, videotape, PDFs and other downloadable print-based materials.

Example of programs in action: Through PHTN, CDC has established ongoing communication with 66 professional organizations that represent front-line clinicians to determine the smallpox training and education needs of their members. CDC has conducted 19 different training and education courses on smallpox that target clinicians, public health workers, and the general population. Specifically, thousands of clinicians participated in CDC's PHTN program on "Clinical Management of Adverse Events Following Smallpox Vaccination: A National Training Initiative." In addition, CDC along with state health officials mailed nationwide a critical clinician information packet on smallpox and the smallpox vaccine to the nation's practicing clinical communities.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will continue to pursue the highest standards for laboratory training and distance learning in traditional and emerging technologies, and to identify and promote best practices in adult and technology-supported learning.